

I'm very active in a wide range of foreign affairs issues, from Latin America to the Middle East and everywhere in between. I believe my experience as a Peace Corps volunteer affords me an understanding of other countries that many of my colleagues lack, and I'm happy to put that experience to work in Washington.

Iraq and Afghanistan

I have consistently opposed the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and my opposition remains unwavering. While I applaud President Obama for making clear his intention to withdraw troops from both countries, I continue to believe that our presence only aggravates the situation and delays the inevitable time when locals must take control of their own futures.

From the start I was skeptical about what our military could accomplish in either country. I believe that the past nine years have proved beyond a reasonable doubt that invading and occupying Afghanistan and Iraq has been a monumental foreign policy blunder that has resulted in thousands of lives lost, billions of dollars squandered and no improvement to our national security.

I have repeatedly voted to fix this failed policy by eliminating all funds for war except those exclusively used for troop safety and withdrawal. I have also been a strong proponent for a detailed plan on how we'll be leaving those countries, including the many contractors who operate there.

There's no question that our military is the most powerful in the world. But it has become crystal clear that military might alone cannot sustain peace. Political and military leaders agree on this, but we need to turn that agreement into action.

I wrote an op-ed in *Politico* titled " [The sword alone will not bring peace](#) " where I lay out my desire to see increased funding for our diplomatic mission. Until we can sustain peace, our military's prowess in creating peace will never be sufficient.

I continue to bring pressure on a wide range of stakeholders to put more money into economic development and to come up with a credible plan to bring our troops home.

Arab-Israeli conflict

I believe peace is possible in the Middle East, but that peace will demand political courage and dedication. The Obama administration has demonstrated both.

Confronted on all sides by parties who seek to posture, grab land or curry political favor, making peace is not easy. My role is to create the political space for all sides to move through a constructive process toward peace. I will continue to support the administration's effort to actively broker a lasting peace deal in this troubled region. The status quo has devastating consequences for Israelis, Palestinians and the entire region.

Let me be clear: I deplore the missile attacks against Israelis. There is no excuse for taking the life of innocent civilians.

But I also believe the current blockade of Gaza, even allowing for basic building supplies, foodstuffs, and medicine getting in, remains highly restrictive. It has left families hungry and in poor living conditions for years, and is not contributing to peace or long-term security.

Time and time again I have used my vote and my voice to push for security for Israel, prosperity for Palestine and long-term peace for both. Both Israelis and Palestinians must realize that violence is not a solution to the conflict. The path to peace must be negotiated.

The debate about Israel and Palestine should not be about righteousness, historical precedence or volume of grievances. Rather, the focus must be on solutions, what to do now to curb violence and seek a peaceful, political solution to the conflict.

I believe the United States needs to play an active and constructive role in the peace process, as happened under President Clinton. It's unlikely that there will be a lasting peace in the Middle East without sustained diplomatic leadership on the part of the United States government. I believe the president must actively engage in steering both sides toward a path of peace, providing security for Israel and the political autonomy and economic development for the Palestinians. I'm heartened by President Obama's level of engagement and I will do all that I can to support his continued leadership.

Latin America

I strongly support our regional allies in Latin America and continue to be a voice in support of economic and social development in the hemisphere. I've traveled to South America many times in the last handful of years and use my knowledge of the region to influence our national policy.

Colombia

I have long championed a balanced approach to Colombia as it combats the twin scourges of drug trafficking and organized crime. The idea of a "drug war" never seemed appropriate for what I thought our goals in Colombia should be. For too long the United States invested in military build-up rather than the creation of a foundation for social and economic development that could lead to long-term peace and prosperity.

Over the past three years, we've seen tremendous progress in the way the United States provides assistance to Colombia. More and more, our support for Colombia is targeted to rebuilding the justice system so that it can prosecute drug dealers and human rights abuses. We have invested heavily in the governance programs so Colombia will have the capacity to manage its public security forces and build a prosperous future.

I continue to push for greater attention to human rights. Annually I request that the human rights unit and the labor rights unit of the Colombian Attorney General's office receives the resources it needs to prosecute human rights cases violators and crimes against trade

unionists.

Mexico

If my experience in Colombia has taught me anything, it's that investments in functioning governmental institutions and security forces that respect human rights is fundamental to success. In Mexico, we must remember that arming and equipping the authorities may be required, but force alone won't be sufficient to dismantle the criminal organizations that are terrorizing the Mexican people.

While continuing to provide up-to-date equipment as part of the Merida Initiative, I believe the United States has an obligation to invest in civil society organizations that help monitor and improve police and military performance and justice sector reform. We should continue to support the Mexican authorities at the federal, state and local levels so that the Mexican people will have confidence in their abilities and trust in their integrity. If we accomplish this, we will also remove a large cause of illegal immigration to our country.

A significant part of winning the struggle against the dangerous drug cartels is building confidence in the Mexican public security authorities. The better managed the security agencies and policing practices, the more effective the authorities will be at protecting the Mexican people while defeating criminals.

I don't let a hearing go by in the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee without bringing up the need to control our border. Reducing the illegal flow of drugs and as well as illegal human trafficking is essential to the security of both our countries.

Cuba

I've traveled to Cuba several times since arriving in Congress. Central to my vision for reforming our relations with Cuba is fostering travel and cultural exchange. I've met with administration officials to advocate the expansion of acceptable categories of travel, while working tirelessly to build support for Congress to get rid of the travel ban.

In 2008 I spent a day in New York City meeting with journalists and travel industry insiders about the prospects of Cuba travel. On that trip I was quoted as saying: "If you are a potato, you can get to Cuba very easily, but if you are a person, you can't, and that is our problem."

Fostering close relations with our neighbors in Latin America is a no-brainer, and I will continue to push to improve those alliances.

Peace Corps

In the mid-1960s I spent two years in Colombia as a Peace Corps volunteer. It was the most formative experience of my life, and I continue to carry the lessons I learned there with me today. I learned to live in a different culture, to understand the basic needs of people and to appreciate the resources that existed in my own country.

In 2009, I led a successful campaign to increase the funding for the Peace Corps. In 2009, the funding level was set at \$340 million. After a lot of hard work, that budget was bumped to \$400 million in 2010. I strongly believe that, dollar for dollar, the Peace Corps is our most effective diplomatic tool, and we should offer it our full-throated support. I commend the House State, Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee for its work on this.

Key bills I cosponsored during the 111th Congress (2009-2010):

- [H.R. 4933](#) - Global HEALTH Act of 2010
- [H.R. 4879](#) - Global Democracy Promotion Act
- [H.R. 4594](#) - International Violence Against Women Act of 2010
- [H.R. 4573](#) - Haiti Debt Relief and Earthquake Recovery Act of 2010
- [H.R. 4298](#) - Gun Trafficking Prevention Act of 2009
- [H.R. 3359](#) - US and the World Education Act
- [H.R. 3077](#) - Global Food Security Act of 2009
- [H.R. 2567](#) - Latin America Military Training Review Act
- [H.R. 2521](#) - National Infrastructure Development Bank Act of 2009
- [H.R. 2499](#) - Puerto Rico Democracy Act of 2010

- [H.R. 2404](#) - Requires reports to Congress outlining exit strategy from Afghanistan
- [H.R. 2272](#) - United States-Cuba Trade Normalization Act of 2009
- [H.R. 2177](#) - Transparency and Accountability in Security Contracting Act of 2009
- [H.R. 2134](#) - Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission Act of 2009
- [H.R. 1531](#) - Promoting American Agricultural and Medical Exports to Cuba Act of 2009
- [H.R. 1530](#) - Free Trade With Cuba Act
- [H.R. 1528](#) - Export Freedom to Cuba Act of 2009
- [H.R. 1283](#) - Military Readiness Enhancement Act of 2009
- [H.R. 808](#) - Department of Peace Act
- [H.R. 591](#) - Interrogation and Detention Reform Act of 2008